

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

271213Z Oct 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001677

SIPDIS

ABIDJAN FOR NICHOLAS HILGERT; ACCRA FOR NATHAN BLUHM; STATE  
FOR PRM/AFR CAROL ANNE CHANG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CVIS](#) [SMIG](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LATRINE PROJECT AT ORU REFUGEE CAMP STALLS

REF: STATE 116436

1. Summary. Construction of latrines at the Oru Refugee Camp has been delayed by about two months. Recent inspection of the camp revealed the delays were caused by disagreements on the use of refugee labor, disputes over location of latrines, and a restructuring of the Nigerian Red Cross (NRC). The NRC project, financed by the Ambassador's Fund for Refugees (reftel), will remain stalled unless given an external push. End Summary.

-----  
THE CAMP AND ITS INHABITANTS  
-----

2. On Wednesday, October 19, a Consulate officer visited Oru Refugee Camp in Ogun State with UNHCR representatives. Oru is home to 5,325 refugees, approximately 70 per cent from Liberia. The camp consists of five main living areas, known as J Block, IBB, Kabo Estates, Nairobi, and King's Villa, each housing at least 400 people. Kabo Estates is comprised of 72 mudbrick or wood-constructed homes, built with money from the German government and housing anywhere from 10 to 20 people each. There is an eight-room school building, with four of the rooms currently being used as living quarters. Inhabitants partition the rooms with sheets and batik cloth into at least four sections, with eight to ten people in each section. A large town hall building houses over a hundred stragglers. A large number of refugees have also constructed makeshift housing around the main living areas. A steady influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DROC) and Sudan may overcrowd the camp further. (Note. Last year, an estimated 736 people from both countries sought asylum in Nigeria, and this trend has not abated. End Note.)

3. One solitary well provides drinking water for all residents. The residents complain diarrhea and other illnesses are prevalent because of sub-standard water. The clinic is small, providing only 5 beds not yet gender separated, and the NRC has problems stocking the clinic with medicine. The NRC has to wait for money transfers from the UNHCR office to buy drugs, and these transfers are sometimes irregular.

4. UNICEF is sponsoring a nutritional study of the camp. The lead researcher, a University of Ibadan professor, told us his preliminary results indicate rampant malnutrition. The study was designed to focus on 600 mother/child pairs; however, the researcher said he was having difficulties identifying definitive biological matches. Mothers, he explained, often leave the camp for economic reasons, and entrust siblings, cousins, or even more distant relatives with their children. So far, he has been able to get approximately 150 mother/child pairs. A UNHCR program officer along with the NCR representative complained that refugees often sell part or all of their food allotments on the open market.

5. The camp enjoys a large market area, which also provides residents and visitors from the nearby town of Ijebu Ode with a soccer pitch and two night clubs. Camp residents have begun a small computer school and have also created a small fishpond where they farm catfish for sale. These refugee-run businesses are thriving, and both the nightclubs and the computer school are better maintained than the housing units.

-----  
REPATRIATION?  
-----

6. Of the many Liberians interviewed during the visit, not one was committed to repatriation. UNHCR representatives say the desire to resettle in the U.S. has kept many of the occupants in the camp since 1990. Refugees do not believe that the U.S. resettlement program has concluded. The UNHCR is attempting to arrange repatriation for 500 refugees by boat in November, but so far only 120 have volunteered. An information officer from Liberia will visit the camp in late October to convince refugees to return to Liberia.

-----

## THE LATRINE PROJECT

17. The over 5000 refugees at Oru do not have acceptable toilet facilities. Of the approximately 15 existing latrines, most do not work properly. The latrines themselves are narrow stalls with either a hole in the ground or a hole with a porcelain cover. Handicap toilets are created by heaping cement blocks on top of these latrines and adding a makeshift seat. Drainage pipes are buried in shallow ground, and sewage seeps quickly up above the ground behind the units. The NRC plans to build new latrine facilities for four of the five housing units on the same model as the current ones.

18. If current construction plans continue, one housing area of 400 people will be left without a toilet. The Camp Commandant, representing the GON on site, claims the residents of that compound had not supplied a suitable recommendation for where to locate the latrines. Many refugees emerged during the visit to dispute the choice of the four housing complexes to receive toilet access. In addition, one refugee representative claimed the NRC and the GON were not using refugee labor where possible and underpaying when they do use it. The NRC has not yet provided a list of bids or possible contractors for the project, but an NRC representative gave assurances that refugee labor would be used and properly paid. However, the NRC representative stated that only 18 latrine stalls could be built for the \$20,000 as opposed to the 20 promised in the original proposal.

19. The NRC has also had difficulties arranging for proper financial controls over the \$20,000 grant awarded reftel. Their treasurer recently retired, and a realignment of top officers ensued. It has been difficult for them to find a replacement treasurer, and they have consequently not been able to create a separate account through which to disburse these funds and through which funds could be easily tracked.

110. A consulate official has met with UNHCR and NRC representatives no fewer than 4 times to expedite the construction of the latrines. Post will now broker a meeting between the UNHCR and NRC to establish concrete deadlines for identifying contractors and for breaking ground on the first set of stalls. Compliance with these deadlines will be the condition for final receipt of funds. In addition, Post will send a consular officer to the camp to explain the resettlement program, the reasons for its discontinuation, and further reasons for repatriation to Liberia. Post notes that a visit to the camp by one of the regional refugee coordinators could be very helpful and instructive for the refugee population.

BROWNE